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OCEANIA

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF AUSTRALIA, NEW GUINEA AND THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN

VOLUME XXIV
1953-1954

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SOCIAL CONTROL AMONGST THE OROKAIVA

By Marie Reay

Introduction

"Orokaiva" is a general term denoting people speaking Binandele and related dialects who occupy a large part of the Northern Division of Papua. Orokaiva society was investigated in some detail in the 1920's by the late Dr. F. E. Williams, Government Anthropologist. This article is based upon data furnished in Dr. Williams' published work,[1] supplemented by observations recorded by the author during a brief field period early in 1951 which was interrupted by the eruption of Mt. Lamington. My own observations refer to the Wasida or Jegase Sarahu tribe,[2] whereas some of Dr. Williams' information was gathered from the Aiga, Binandele and Tain Daware tribes, which are situated in other parts of the Division but nevertheless reveal a social organization practically identical with that of the Wasida people.

In investigating social control amongst the Orokaiva, three aspects will be examined which would seem to be important in any empirical study of social control. Firstly, there are the ideals people expect one another to try to live up to: the Orokaiva use the convenient term *otohu* to refer to these. Secondly, it is necessary to study education in conformity, which involves a consideration of Orokaiva childhood and an examination of the ritual of initiation from this point of view. Thirdly, there are the actual sanctions operating to encourage conformity with Orokaiva ideals. There will be an attempt, finally, to assess the effectiveness of this system.

(1) Orokaiva Ideals

The Orokaiva term *otohu* is perhaps midway between behaviour which is normally expected and that which is ideally desirable. This term is used in two senses: adjectivally, it indicates that the person so described is well-behaved in certain definite ways and, secondly, it signifies an honorific ornament worn by a large number of people. A man is *otohu* if he is generous and helpful, and is diligent in gardening and hunting[3]; also, the *otohu* man does not quarrel or brawl, he does not steal, nor does he commit adultery. A woman is *otohu* if she listens to her husband and does not speak to him angrily, if she is faithful to him and accompanies him wherever

[1] F. E. Williams, "Plant-Emblems Among the Orokaiva," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LV, 1925; *Orokaiva Magic* (1928); *Orokaiva Society* (1930).

[2] Called the Jegasa-Sarau tribe by E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver (*Papuan Annual Report* for 1914–15, pp. 158 ff.).

[3] *I.e.*, if he is able to vary the diet of his household occasionally with food from the bush, and if he works his garden regularly.

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he goes, and if she does not steal from the other women. Orokaiva society is organised about the men and the expression of their personalities. To be *otohu*, a man has to be generous; what is required of the woman is that she should concur in her husband's generosity. Wealth is valued, because the possession of enough pigs and a good supply of taro makes it possible for a man to hold a feast. Holding feasts is the epitome of generosity, which is the most important Orokaiva virtue. Men are encouraged to be highly individualistic. Women are individualistic, too, but this seems to be a by-product of male individualism.

The *otohu* ornaments, which are worn by many, are presented during the initiation ceremony to some of the novitiates, but they may be acquired later, on payment of a pig. They were largely homicidal insignia in former times. Some of them still signify that the wearer has killed a pig, but mostly they are ornaments which express the wearer's preparedness to enact the virtues listed above.

How far do the Orokaiva conform to the *otohu* virtues? They are generous and helpful to one another. They work their gardens regularly enough to ensure a plentiful supply of vegetable products from the fertile earth. Apparently adultery takes place rarely, although some of the women habitually accuse their husbands of fornication. Stealing is rare. But the Orokaiva men quarrel and brawl, and the Orokaiva women use "strong talk" to their husbands. So long as the individual does this only occasionally, he or she can still claim to be *otohu*. I have stressed the *otohu* virtues to make it clear that the norm in Orokaiva society is not in conformity with minimum legal requirements, but an approximation to ideal standards.

As well as conforming to the *otohu* ideals, an adult male is expected to be strong and fearless. This expectation is largely unverbalized, excepting in reminiscences of the idealized past. The Orokaiva have a bloody background of constant warfare with the Managalasi and the Togaho as well as continual internecine strife. The war leaders, fearless and fearsome, are greatly admired in retrospect and are held up to the young boys as examples of ideal personalities to emulate. When an institution loses influence and even disintegrates or becomes extinct, motivations continue to be patterned in accordance with them. Warfare happens no longer,[4] so to-day much of the training of Orokaiva boys is anachronistic, because of this "subjective lag."

(2) Education in Conformity

Viewed as a process which implements social control by teaching what norms should be adhered to and what are the consequences of aberrant behaviour, education presents three important aspects: Firstly, it involves the *internalization of norms or ideal patterns*. We are concerned with discovering the values held by adults to be important enough to impress upon the growing child. There are the explicit values, and in studying how these are impressed upon the child we should look for implicit values which are incidentally transmitted. Education occurs within the field of adult-child interaction, which is inevitably authoritative in some respects. In as

[4] Monckton, in the *Papuan Annual Report* for 1904, reports that the pacification of the tribes of this area was accomplished in that year.

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much as the education of the young is a conscious activity of adults, the internalization of norms and ideal patterns involves the manipulation of sanctions. What is sanctioned in childhood is the kind of behaviour required in adult life, plus a range of permitted behaviour, tolerated in youth, which diminishes as the individual grows older. So, secondly, we should be able to find within the field of education *a model of the kind of sanctions which circumscribe adult behaviour. I.e.*, if shame is a dominant sanction in adult life, it would not be surprising to find parents and other educators shaming the recalcitrant child and, at an earlier stage, ensuring that the individual will become sensitive to shame.

Thirdly, it is possible to view education as *authority in action*. It is important to know who educates, and what kinds of authority are exercised during the educative process. In a relatively stable society, we should expect some continuity between these kinds of authority and the kinds of authority used in the workaday and political activities of adults.

There are five stages in the Orokaiva life cycle. The last two—adult person (*embo*, or female *pamone*) and aged adult (*embo evovo* or *pamone evovo*) need not concern us here. It is necessary, however, to consider the first three: the baby (*meni orosati*), the little child (*meni isapa*) and the big boy or girl (*meni dombo*), in some detail, and then to examine the initiation ceremony which marks the transition from *meni dombo* to adult *embo* or *pamone*.

Orokaiva Childhood

An Orokaiva baby, from birth to the time he can walk, is known as *meni orosati*. He lives in a string bag which his mother carries wherever she goes. As the mother jogs along to the gardens, the pliant string bag is pulled taut by the baby's weight, and the characteristic pre-natal position is induced. When she gets to the gardens, she puts the string bag on some leaves on the ground, or hangs it from the branch of a tree, and goes about her digging and weeding. If the baby cries, demonstrating that he is hungry, she will come over to him, take him out of the string bag, and sit down on the ground to feed him. She pushes her nipple into his mouth, continues talking to the other woman, and apparently forgets the baby until he relaxes against her in sleep. Then she puts the baby back into the string bag. If the baby should cry when he is obviously not hungry, the mother gives him no more attention that a single enquiring glance, but if he continues to show signs of pain or sickness she consults one of the old women about him. This is done casually, whenever she happens to meet one of the old women; it is not judged to be urgent. By our standards, the Orokaiva mother seems to take very little interest in her baby. He is a nuisance because he hampers her movements. She fondles him very rarely, and frequently she leaves him for short periods in the care of older siblings.

My information concerning the Orokaiva attitude towards teething (which occurs well before weaning) is fragmentary. As soon as their teeth begin to appear, children are given solid foods to chew. The few babies I saw biting their mothers' breasts during nursing were quickly cuffed and scolded. One mother giggled, as the

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child's teeth tickled her in their tentative exploring. All these mothers laughed at the infants, with comments signifying, " He is not content to drink my milk; he wants to eat me, too."

When the baby learns to walk, even if he is still unsteady on his feet, he ceases to be *meni orosati* and is known as *meni isapa* until he is about eight or nine years old. He stays at home with his older siblings while his mother goes to the garden, but she does not stay there all day now. She leaves the village quite early in the morning and returns to prepare a midday meal. As soon as the child is able to walk with his mother without impeding her progress, he goes to the garden with her. As he grows older, he plays with the other children in the gardens and may help his mother a little. Children of two or three years eat solid foods, mainly taro, but they still suckle. If they hang around their mother, except to approach the breast, she scolds them and makes them go away. Sometimes, if she is busy or does not want to sit down, she refuses them the breast. They go to their father, who spends much of his time sitting on the ground talking with the other men. The father takes the child between his legs, delouses his head affectionately, and holds him in his arms. It is always to the father that the child, especially the male child, runs for comfort.

The *meni isapa*, particularly at the age of two or three years, are the butt of jokes from the grown men, who frighten them by making strange noises and lungeing threateningly in their direction then laughing loudly as they watch the children cry, register bewilderment and run to their fathers. When their initial terror is overcome, the children learn to laugh at their own fright. This happens continually, until the child learns not to be afraid, imitates the men's frightening noises and grins back at them cheekily. All this is accepted by the women, who make no attempt to shield their children from experiencing such frights. If the men are her kinfolk, or friends of her husband or brother, the mother will join in with their raucous laughter. If they are strangers, she will take no notice of the incident. This frightening of small boys (*meni isapa*) is deliberate. Sometimes little girls are frightened incidentally at the same time, but no one takes much notice of this. Men do not go out of their way o frighten the little girls.

From about nine years till initiation at fifteen or sixteen, the child is known as *meni dombo*, or " big boy " (female, *meni kakara dombo*). I know very little about the *meni dombo*, either male or female. Married women among the Orokaiva are alarmed by the behaviour of the *meni kakara dombo*, who approach men casually to demand cigarettes and to talk freely about sexual matters in a joking way. This suggests that parents probably exercised more control in former times over the older children.

In Orokaiva childhood there are at least two conflict situations. At teething, the infant learns that he must not bite the mother's breast. Biting is accorded the immediate punishment of physical blows and unfeeling laughter at the child's expense. A three years old boy wanted to suckle and was kept waiting by his mother, who told him that she was busy and that he was getting too old to suckle anyway. He retaliated by biting her breast, but she hit him, scolded him and chased him away,

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threatening that she would never again let him come to her breast. But as a rule the biting lesson seems to be learned easily, and mothers appear to have very little trouble with children biting them during the prolonged lactation.

The second conflict situation is the one induced by the adult men deliberately provoking fright in the small boy. The boy has to grow up to be fearless. Before the pacification of the Orokaiva and the surrounding tribes, this was part of the training of boys to be warriors. Ultimately, after being frightened by the men quite frequently over a couple of years or so, the boy is no longer afraid. But, in the meantime, his world is uncertain and conflicting. He learns to keep close to his father, so that he can rush to him if someone frightens him, and this association with his father continues long after he overcomes his fear of strange men making strange noises. It does not seem to occur to the child to run for comfort in these circumstances to his mother.

Initiation into Adulthood.

The initiatory rites are clearly divided into three major parts—the terror, the seclusion and the investiture. The initiation of a girl does not encompass all of these. At puberty she is secluded for a time, and then goes through a little purificatory ritual before ceremonially emerging from her seclusion. She does not have to endure the terror.

What I have termed "the terror" is what F. E. Williams refers to as the "initiation ceremony proper."[1] After being secluded for a short time, the candidates emerge and are shown the bullroarers and sacred flutes. Then the *embahi* (malevolent spirits) appear to them by moonlight and chase them around the village. The boys' parents cry out to the spirits to spare their children and not to devour them, but the *embahi* rush around crying out, "Kambo, kambo, kambo!" (Bite, bite, bite!). The boys are well aware that the *embahi* are a sham, and that they are really only fellow-villagers in disguise, but they are terrified none the less. Eventually, the *embahi* allow the boys' parents to overpower them and chase them from the village.

After they have undergone the "terror," the boys are secluded in the *oro* ("men's house"). ". . . During this period, they are instructed to be honest, obliging and diligent." They learn to play the flutes, and they plait armlets; otherwise they are inactive. Food is served to them by some old men. The boy's *nobo* (mother's brother), who has appeared as one of the *embahi* then returns to the village, divested of his frightening make-up, to lead the boy to the *oro* for his seclusion, and is responsible for feeding him during this period.

The final phase of the initiation is the boy's emergence from his seclusion. Like the girl on her emergence, he goes through a purificatory ritual. Then he is fitted with the *hokumbari* (feather headdresses), the wearing of which is a demonstration of his manhood. Again, it is the *nobo* (mother's brother) who presents him with the

[1] *Orokaiva Society*, p. 180, also pp. 181–192.

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headdresses. At the conclusion of the initiation, some of the initiates are presented with the *otohu* ornaments. (Formerly, it was always a distinguished warrior who presented these.) The initiates then fast for a day and a night. That night, there is sexual licence for the senior villagers, a temporary lifting of tabus on incest and adultery, but the initiates themselves are not permitted to participate.

In interpreting the initiation ceremonies of the Orokaiva, Chinnery and Beaver state that " the idea . . . seems to be to instil absolute and lasting terror into the candidates, and to make them think that their elders have beaten off the spirits ; while in this receptive and chastened frame of mind, the lads, imbued with the idea of the power of the men, will pay attention to the instruction given. There appears to be an idea that the spirits of the dead are present, and that the initiated, *i.e.* the living, are keeping them away from the candidates."[6]

Amongst the living, the initiation ritual juxtaposes the two groups, initiated and uninitiated, the one group terrified and utterly helpless, and the other well able to deal with the *embahi* spirits and drive away danger. Thus the respect for seniority, which is informally learned during childhood, is finally established.

An Erikson-type psychoanalytic interpretation would doubtless find in the *embahi's* threat to devour the boys, with the menacing reiteration " Bite, bite, bite ! " a dramatization of the *meni orosati's* guilt at biting the mother. I have not enough data to confirm or deny the admissibility of such an interpretation.

Above all, initiation involves the explicit instruction of the boys in the *otohu* virtues. This instruction takes place during their period of seclusion in the *oro*. Later, when *otohu* ornaments are given to some of them, they are again exhorted in detail to practise these virtues. The possession of an *otohu* imposes a social obligation on the wearer to " live up to it," and the prestige associated with this ornament indubitably ensures that a large number of people do in fact approximate to the ideal *otohu* patterns of behaviour.

(3) Sanctions

In Orokaiva society, sanctions operate diffusely and need no specific person's direction to put them into effect. The *embo kiti*, whom F. E. Williams called a " clan headman," but who is really more of a village headman whose position is hereditary within a certain lineage of the clan, has a limited authority which is backed by no sanctions. He has no power to reward or punish, except by making obvious his approval or disapproval of various lines of action. In fact, there is no rewarding and punishing authority at all.

Retaliation seems to have been the commonest sanction in former times, in the form of direct violence or the more subtle method of sorcery.[7] Retaliation by sorcery may still be practised ; I have no information on this point. Certainly deaths are still attributed to sorcery. When (during 1950) several people from the same village

[6] E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver, in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XLV, 1915.

[7] F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, pp. 327–329.

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681 754 [648] died within a couple of months, these deaths were said to have been the result of sorcery. There was no strenuous effort to trace the sorcerer, because knowledge of his identity would bring the obligation to exercise fatal punishment, which would involve trouble with the Administration.

681 684 Retaliation by direct violence still takes place, although the Orokaiva are generally careful not to let it have a fatal result. If a woman is found to have committed adultery, her husband thrashes her. Traditionally, he has a right to take direct action against the co-respondent also, but nowadays he is more likely to tell his *naname* (friend), who calls the adulterer a series of uncomplimentary names in public and makes his position so intolerable that he will leave the village. The offender may go into the bush for a while, but generally he goes to some other village where he has a *naname* of his own who will give him shelter and hospitality.

If a woman suspects her husband of adultery, she accuses him loudly in public, and if the husband cannot satisfy her that her suspicions are ill-founded, she will gather her few belongings in a string bag and set out for her own village. This act of the woman, while she is in a mood of righteous anger, is regarded as retaliation. "Now," she cries as a parting shot, "you will have no one to cook for you!" Actually, it is not difficult for the man to find a friend's wife or some kinswoman to cook for him, but the routine of his life is upset.

681 Clearly, the sanction of retaliation is severely limited by the modern prohibition of killing, for it is necessarily somewhat abortive without the freedom to carry it through. Nowadays, the pattern is to leave the field rather than stay and fight it out. In domestic squabbles, either the guilty parties or the wronged ones who are unable to retaliate can leave the village until tempers have cooled. If arguments between segments of a village recur and seem to be developing into a feud, one section can break away to found a new village at a little distance from the first.

Retaliation is impossible when crimes are carried out surreptitiously so that the crime is discovered but the criminal is not known. There remains the sanction of self-injury, which makes the wrongdoer feel sorry for the wronged one and therefore ashamed of having caused him to suffer. F. E. Williams cites two cases of theft which illustrate the operation of this peculiarly oblique sanction. To make the thief realize the enormity of his offence, the owner of a stolen watermelon hacked the rest of his crop to pieces, and the owner of a stolen spear chopped down his house where he had left the spear. The injured man aggravates his own injury, so that [152] pity for him will induce shame in the culprit. This attitude on the part of the injured man is largely a blend of anger and self-pity. It is called *sisiva*.[8]

152. 681 This sanction demonstrates how the Orokaiva tends to take revenge upon the person who hurt his feelings by punishing himself. This is something of this self-punishing, too, in the wearing of the *herata* (plant-emblem) as a symbol of abstention from food belonging to or prepared by someone who has wronged him.[9]

[8] F. E. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
[9] *Idem.*, p. 116.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be said that the Orokaiva have a fairly weak system of social control. The sanctions against wrongdoing are all diffuse, and do not always work successfully. There seems to be a complete absence of any effective judicial system. A thief or a murdering sorcerer has to be caught in the act to be punished at all. There is no machinery for discovering the culprit.[10] In a domestic crisis, a woman will "retaliate" by leaving her husband ostensibly with no one to cook for him, but it is easy for him to find someone willing to do his cooking. He does this by invoking pity. If a situation is unbearable, an individual can always leave the village. A woman can go to her kinsfolk, and a man to his *naname's* village.

The only person an Orokaiva can punish effectively is himself. There seems to be a good deal of impotent rage in the destruction of a man's own property in a fit of *sisiva*. Also, the wronged man is sorry for himself, and he ensures that everyone else, including the person who wronged him, feels sorry for him, too. The masochistic sanction of self-injury, with the purpose of invoking the criminal's pity, is in direct contrast to the outward aggression of the Orokaiva's traditional relations with the hostile Tagaho and Managalasi. It is possible that the weakness of the internal judicial system was originally due to the necessity for keeping overt aggression geared towards the enemy groups. To maintain constant warfare with outsiders, internal aggression had to be severely limited, even aggression towards wrongdoers. Hence, perhaps, the unwillingness to ferret out the culprit when a theft occurs or a person dies from sorcery, unless the criminal is actually caught in the act.

The relationship between institutionalized friendship and social control is ambiguous. A man's *naname* are his contemporaries who were secluded with him in the *oro* during his initiation, and other friends he may acquire later. Every man has many *naname* scattered throughout neighbouring and distant villages. Being somebody's *naname* constitutes a bond which overrides all other considerations. A man's loyalty to his *naname* is said to be stronger than his loyalty to his family and his relatives. Although, theoretically, a man who is *otohu* never quarrels and brawls, if he is involved in brawls in defence of a *naname* he is paradoxically judged to be more *otohu* than ever. So strong is the bond between *naname* that in fact men cannot conceive of committing offences against anyone who stands in this relationship to them.[11] This attitude tends to be extended to friends of a man's *naname*, so normally there are very few people in the community who are potential victims of, say, a man's impulse to steal. Considered as an instrument of social control, institutionalized friendship minimizes the possibility of deviance.

Formerly, the conduct of wars and cannibal raids was determined largely by this institution. The Koropata people who went to help their allies at Isivita in a

[10] L. A. Flint (*Papuan Annual Report*, 1924–25, p. 43) describes various ways of tracing the sorcerer, but says nothing of the effectiveness of these methods. Certainly in 1951 the Wasida and Koropata people seemed sceptical of these methods and said that they did not bother trying to discover the sorcerer by these means.

[11] One informant went so far as to say that if a man were to discover that he had committed some offence against his *naname* "by mistake," he would kill himself.

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war against the Managalasi were those who had friends at Isivita and those who were friends (*naname*) of men already committed by friendship to go. The conduct of warfare depended upon these personal links between *naname*, who had a binding obligation to fight for one another. The Wasida people still say of their traditional enemies (the Togaho, the Managalasi, and the Orokaiva of Sairope), "We have no friends among them." Having no friends among them, and having no friends in common with them, they were free to fight.

Institutionalized friendship also operates against social control, in regard to the consequences of wrongdoing. If a man is driven from his own village by shame for a wrong he has committed, he is welcomed by his *naname*, whose hospitality is always ready. It is impossible for a man to be a social outcast, as he can stay in his *naname's* village as long as he likes as a welcome and honoured guest.

Therefore, social control amongst the Orokaiva is perhaps weaker than it is in the more formalized societies, because of the internal stresses imposed by constantly recurring warfare, and because also the efficient conduct of wars and cannibal raids involved the institutionalization of friendship to such a degree that it provides, even to-day, a loophole for the deviant. On the other hand, this institution itself tends to minimize the possibility of deviance by providing each man with a category of people towards whom it is inconceivable that he should act otherwise than in strict accordance with the *otoku* ideals.

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